

# How This Man Became a "Lumber King"

By E. B. CHAPMAN

IN 1875 a tall, spare young man stood on the prairie near Columbus, Kas., and watched the smoke arise from what had been his hay baling machine a few minutes before. Only a few bits of iron remained of the machine, the purchase of which had cost the larger part of his savings.

The hay baling contract never had paid. Now the machine was destroyed, and funds he had borrowed were invested in lumber in large sheds he had built to protect the hay after it had been baled.

It seemed a dismal end to the dream that had brought him from Shelby County, Kentucky, where he was born, to the Sunflower State. He had lain on the bank of the river on a summer day, dreaming the day dreams boys everywhere like to give themselves over to; he had decided to "go out West," make a lot of money and come back and "show 'em." The hay baling contract had been his first undertaking. It had been a costly venture from the start and now fire had added to his loss.

But the young Kentuckian was too young to be given over to despair more than a short time. He would tear down the hay sheds he had constructed, sell them for what he could get, apply that upon the money he had borrowed and try again.

Two months ago the same man, no longer the inexperienced youth but a man of sixty years, stopped for six months the increasing lumber prices throughout the nation. Such is the prestige of the Long-Bell Lumber Company that when it notified its customers there would be no advance in prices for six months, other companies were forced to market their product under the same conditions. The young Kentuckian now is R. A. Long, multimillionaire, president of the immense lumber concern and owner of 70 per cent of its stock. Besides the lumber company he has other interests so varied he must, at times, feel the need of checking up his lists to see just what they are.

When the hay contractor attempted to sell his used lumber at retail, following the disastrous close of his experience in the hayfield, he had unexpected success. The lumber brought more than he had paid for it. He associated himself with Robert White and Victor B. Bell, sons of men who were officials in the Kansas City Savings Bank, and bought a carload of lumber with which to open a lumber yard at Columbus.

That venture succeeded from the start. After two years R. A. Long & Company opened a branch yard in a nearby town. That was R. A. Long's last failure. It taught him what not to do. As soon as his profits made funds available he again opened branches in Kansas towns. Today the company of which he is head operates 25,000 yards, both wholesale and retail.

No one outside the members of the firm knows just what the properties of the Long-Bell Company are worth. There are great manufacturing plants and wholesale establishments. The value of the mill properties runs into millions of dollars. The lands include millions of acres. It owns standard gauge steam railroads, steamships, coal mines, general merchandise stores, land companies and a 15-story building at Tenth street and Grand avenue, Kansas City, as perfect in every detail as human brains and artistic taste could make it. In this building are the general offices of the firm.

Long ago Mr. Long went back to the old home—but not to "show 'em," as he had intended as a boy. Rather it was to help them, for he gave liberally while on the trip to the deserving institutions he had known as a boy. Not only that, but he bought fine horses, paying what was at that time a record price. He found boyhood friends, put them to work in his lumber plants and thus provided the opportunity that led to the realization of dreams of wealth by others.

Success, however, has only caused Mr. Long to work harder. His neighbors say they set their watches by his departure for the office, knowing that it is exactly 7:30 o'clock each morning when the Long car leaves the gate of the one-million-dollar, burglar-proof home on Scarritt Point. He is one of the few men in the office building whose name is on the list of persons likely to be in the building before and after what the town regards as working hours. Every Saturday afternoon, every holiday, he is in his office. He believes in vacations—for others. And as if to impress the visitor with the value of the time of Kansas City's richest citizen, a clock in the office rings every fifteen minutes.

But business, however it may occupy him, does not absorb Mr. Long entirely. He finds time to do many things the man in charge of far smaller establishments has apparently no opportunity to enjoy. One of these is writing letters to young men who seek his advice upon many matters. He is intensely interested in young men. Every company in which he is interested seeks to employ them. Hundreds have been taken up by men in charge of the Long firms, developed and made successful.

"Our company, like others, always is on the lookout for the kind of young men that appeals to us as worth-while," Mr. Long says. "Not the 'bright' kind, however. It is my observation the so-called 'bright' young man is handicapped for business success. We much prefer the plodding type if they are industrious. They are more willing to work overtime to master a problem than the one who usually grasps things more readily. When the more brilliant youth meets a knotty proposition he becomes discouraged more quickly than the fellow who has had to work harder all the way."

Then he names the officers of the Long-Bell organization, all of them taken into the organization when they were young, virtually none with more than the common school education, and tells how they made a success of business and themselves. That was accomplished in each case, he says, by the industry and application to business of the men who now own stock in the concerns to which they went as small



R. A. LONG, "Lumber King"

salaried employees. "And remember," Mr. Long smiled, "We never sought the 'bright' ones."

Never have there been so many opportunities for young men as they are today, Mr. Long believes.

"We are a young and rapidly expanding nation," he said. "Our business, just out of infancy, is growing as is the business of no other nation in the world. Business expansion makes the demand for young men who can be taken up by the larger concerns, developed until the youthful shoulders prove themselves ready for heavy responsibilities, and then paid salaries which spell success."

"The chief failing of the young men of today is impatience. They become hungry for quick success."

## Government Advice on Wheat Sowing

THE Department of Agriculture, in a recommendation bulletin issued for farmers, says that more wheat should be sown this fall than was the average in pre-war years, but not so much should be sown as was sown last year. The department, of course, is watching the changes of world supply and demand while European countries are getting back to normal in food production and thus affecting the market for American products, and it is upon the various surveys taken and examined that the foregoing recommendation is based.

Specialists abroad have made their reports in detail. It is suggested that 42,000,000 acres be sown to wheat, and that 20,000,000 acres be sown in 1920 to the spring wheat, making a probable aggregate production in 1920 of 830,000,000 bushels of which 200,000,000 bushels would be available for export after home needs are met.

The suggested acreage for fall-sown wheat is approximately eighty-five per cent of the area sown in 1918 and is about the same as was sown in the fall of 1917. The suggested area for spring wheat is approximately 88 per cent of the area sown in each of the last two years. The combined acreage suggested is about 86 per cent of that sown for the 1919 crop, and slightly more than the acreage sown for the bumper crop of 1915.

## When Man First Drilled Holes

IT IS probable that man learned his first lesson in drilling from the woodpecker, and modeled his first drill after the bill of that industrious bird. The first uses of drilling were in making ornaments, to be worn around the neck on sinews or grasses. Shells and beads were made in this manner.

The perfecting of the drill for rapid work followed very slowly. The twirling between the palms of the hands continued for a long time, supplemented by the sharp blow of a stone hammer on the top of the drill. Finally, however, some ingenious man tied a string to the top of the drill, and noticed that if he wound the sinew around the drill and then pulled it quickly, the drill revolved very rapidly and rewound the sinew for another pull, so that he could get an almost continuous twist.

Wooden and stone drills were fashioned by prehistoric man, long before the age when man learned how to extract metals from the earth and mould them to his needs.

Profits in legitimate business come too slowly for them. They are led into speculation, and ruin usually follows.

"I remember how painfully slowly our profits came the first fifteen years," he continued. "But we were laying the foundation for our business at that time. The next fifteen years they came much faster. In the years that have followed that period they have come with startling rapidity. But it is because our foundation was right."

Honesty, while a foundation for a business success, doesn't insure it, Mr. Long holds. Neither does good judgment. Neither do both.

"A man may be honest and fail because he lacks judgment. He may be honest and have good judgment and fail because he is not industrious. Work and a willingness to learn a business from the bottom are required."

Mr. Long has no patience with the man who retires when he has accumulated a competency.

"It is selfish for a man to retire in middle age merely because he has enough wealth to keep him from want," the lumber king declared. "Men owe it to themselves, their community, their nation, to produce wealth as long as they can."

THE farmer's son who has made millions had no panacea for the industrial unrest of today.

"In the beginning the causes of labor troubles today were due to the selfishness or neglect of the employer," he said. "The situation caused by that neglect, that failure to see the position of the employee, has developed into present day conditions."

There is a two-fold enjoyment in riches, Mr. Long says. The first enjoyment is in the making of money. The next and the one he considers necessary to the thorough enjoyment of riches is the distribution of them.

"The man who merely has made money has had only half the enjoyment his money should bring," the former hay contractor says. "The other half is in its distribution."

"I have told my friends the poorest rich man I knew of in America was Russell Sage," the financier added. "Mr. Sage was extremely successful in making money. But he missed the pleasure distributing it brings. Disposing of money so it will bring happiness to others brings the greater joy."

No one knows just how much Mr. Long has given away. Almost ten years ago his gifts totaled one million dollars. Since that time his gifts have been larger. One project alone, the Men and Millions religious movement, was given one million dollars at one time. But he is too thorough in business methods to do any hit-or-miss giving. The distribution is systematized carefully. His gifts to the Christian Church organization run into hundreds of thousands; to the projects of that church other hundreds of thousands have been given. The Christian Church Hospital in Kansas City was founded upon an initial gift from Mr. Long that would make half a dozen families wealthy even in these days of depreciated dollars. The Independence Boulevard Christian Church in Kansas City, with its seventy grand rooms, including gymnasium, swimming pool, running track, handball courts and its five costly pipe organs practically was built by Mr. Long who gave \$230,000 of the \$300,000 it cost. There are many such monuments to his generosity.

Each year hundreds of families are taken from Kansas City to Longview, the Long country home of 1,600 acres a few miles from Kansas City. The capacity of the camp is tested from early spring until fall. Every two weeks the camp is filled by poor mothers and their children who are taken to the farm, fed and lodged fourteen days and returned to their homes without expense.

Mr. Long refuses to state the amount of his gifts or the cost of the humanitarian projects he supports.

"Whatever I have given has been because I wished to give it. I gave for the pleasure it brought me," he said and his face showed the happiness he seemed to take in his distribution of money.

Mr. Long has no patience with the new theories of Christianity now being taught in some colleges.

"Some of our colleges that should be making Christians are turning out infidels," he said. "The new theories of religion, in many cases, seem to be getting us too far away from the first principles of religion."

Mr. and Mrs. Long have two daughters, Mrs. Hayne Ellis, wife of a lieutenant commander in the Navy and Mrs. Loula Long Combs, wife of R. Pryor Combs, the son of the Rev. George Hamilton Combs, many years the pastor of the Independence Boulevard Christian Church, known to Kansas City as "R. A. Long's church." Mrs. Combs is internationally known because of her love for fine horses. She has driven her horses in every nation in which horse shows are held. At the Longview farm there are stables for the string, admitted one of the finest in the world, a private race track and grand stand, and nearly two hundred employees to look after the expensive animals with which the farm is stocked. Mr. Long loves fine stock as only one who was raised on a farm can love it.

His religious nature is so strong he puts his time and money into Christianizing movements eagerly. He has a part in every move for better things in his town. His business, he admits, is his life; he enters his office every day with all the joy of a man forty years younger.

"What do you do for recreation?" a visitor asked.

"Work," was the quick reply.

"I mean what is your favorite exercise," the visitor insisted.

"Work," the lumber king answered.

"But your pleasures—do you play golf?"

"Work," insisted the smiling man, the farmer's boy who left home to make a lot of money and who has made fifty million dollars, according to the estimates of his friends.